

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

## CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND APOLOGETICS.

**CHRISTIAN ETHICS.** By Newman Smyth. Crown 8vo, pp. 300. Charles Scribner's Sons. \$1.00.

THE LEADING MODERN CHRISTIANITY DEFINITELY STATED. By Alexander Balmain Bruce, D. D., Professor of Apologetics and New Testament Exegesis, Free Church College, Glasgow. Crown 8vo, pp. 320. Charles Scribner's Sons.

These are the second and third volumes of the International Theological Library, the editors of which are Professor Charles A. Briggs, of this city, and Professor Stewart D. F. Salmond, of Free Church College, Aberdeen, Scotland. In noticing, a few months ago, the first volume of the Library, Dr. Driver's "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament," we took occasion to commend the comprehensive scope of the Library, as meeting many of the religious needs of the day, and also its high standard of scholarship, as evidenced by Dr. Driver's work. The two volumes now before us amply confirm both of these judgments. Professor Smyth needs no introduction to American scholars. As the author of a number of theological works marked by religious insight and luminous statement, but more especially as a leader in the progressive theological movement in the Congregational churches, he has reached a plane of influence second to no Christian thinker in the country. On the ethical imports of Christianity he has spent many years of thought and investigation, the results of which are recorded in this volume. No one needs to be told how large a place the ethical side of Christianity holds to-day in the thought of Christians of every name. And a book on that subject by Professor Smyth will therefore arouse an interest which a perusal of it will amply repay.

In the field of Christian apologetics Professor Bruce is recognized as an authority. This subject also is one to which the Christian world is devoting a great deal of thought. The old defenses of the Bible and of Christian religion have become obsolete or ineffective, first, because Christianity itself has modified its attitude as to many features of dogma and doctrine, and, secondly, because those who oppose and attack it have changed their mode of warfare and have discarded their old weapons. The apologetic method of Paley would be useless to-day in repelling attacks that Paley did not even dream of. And, therefore, a book by such a scholar and divine as Professor Bruce, answering what the living foes of Christianity are saying at the present moment, will be welcomed by all Christians who wish to see their faith adequately defended.

Doubtless the title of Professor Smyth's book will arouse the criticism of those who may be called materialists. Why Christian ethics? They will ask. Is morality sectarian? But the question is really only a quibble. By Christian ethics is meant the ethical impulse enshrined in the Christian religion, and considering how much the Christian interpretation of ethics has already modified the world's civilization, it is by no means arrogant for a Christian writer to differentiate what is so much in evidence in the history of mankind. Indeed, a writer on ethics who should ignore the ethics of the best Christian consciousness would prove himself unfit for the task he undertakes. The Christian consciousness is not an obscure episode in the moral progress of man. It cannot be dismissed with an epigram, or ruled out of court by the mere ipse dixit of any man. The ethics of naturalism is without doubt fruitful in certain results; but it is only a small part of the ethical history of mankind. Whether we like Christianity or not, we must acknowledge the fact that it has not merely modified, but recreated the moral consciousness of the human race.

In the middle ages ethics was subordinated to scholastic theology, and Christianity has not yet wholly unlearned this mistake. The natural virtues were clumsily joined to the supernatural graces, without any suspicion that they are always and ever inseparably one. Modern Christianity has first analyzed and then synthesized these two aspects of the same fact, and has given the world a philosophy of ethics that grows naturally out of human conduct and fits into all the variations of human nature. There is no longer that dualism which characterized the medieval philosophy, on one side the moral standards of secular life and on the other side the moral precepts of the Church, with a yawning chasm between them, only to be crossed by the frail and questionable bridges of casuistry. Right is right and wrong is wrong, whether we consider it from the secular or religious point of view.

"Old theology is always becoming new in the vitalizing influence of ethics. The Church will not long refuse to bring any article of its faith to the test of its most Christlike sense of love and fairness. It is reason enough for doubting and for rethinking any traditional teaching or received word of doctrine, if it be felt to harass or to confuse the Christian conscience of an age. Nothing can abide as true in theology which does not prove in genuineness under the ever-renewed searching of the Christian moral sense; nothing is permanent form of the teaching of Christ which does not show itself to be morally Christlike."

In that passage, which, unfortunately, is all we have space to quote out of so many well worth quoting, Professor Smyth gives an accurate picture of the character and scope of the new theology of to-day. The name of the movement is really a misnomer, for it aims to elevate to the place of honor, the ethical content of Christianity, even though in so doing it may have to tear down many a venerable theological fabric.

The department of Christian apologetics has been revolutionized within the present generation. The discoveries of science in all its branches, the remarkable growth of Biblical criticism, the decadence of old conceptions of religious truth once thought to be fundamental, and the marked change in the intellectual and religious perspective of the world, have all contributed to bring about this result. New difficulties arise, Christianity, and new doubts concerning its divine origin, have arisen, and they must be met by new arguments. The Christian apologetic is not addressed to the contented slaves of opinion, whether Christian or non-Christian, but to the great army, never so great as to-day, of honest doubters, sincere inquirers and earnest seekers after God and truth, who have a genuine sympathy with the good, and who, in implicit rudimentary faith in Divine Providence, a spiritual receptivity that responds to the teachings of Christianity, and a vague, restless longing for light on the dark problems of life and destiny that under wise direction would surely lead them into Christian discipleship.

The way in which Professor Bruce gets at the fundamental principle of Christianity, as revealed in the New Testament, is characteristic of his simple and direct methods. Unnumbered tomes have been written on the fundamental principle of Christ's teaching without making it absolutely clear what it was, because their authors held a brief for some church or system of theology. This is how Professor Bruce does it: "What was the Jesus above all things obliged to apologize for? It was, as we have already learned, his love to the outcast sinners, the 'publicans and sinners' of Jewish society. That love, then, we may take to be the first and fundamental Christian fact." In this one passage is swept away the whole collection of fundamental facts of Christianity that the Christian sects have so carefully evolved. Whatever may be their value in the development of ecclesiastical life, they do not stand on the same level with that spirit which led Jesus to say: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost."

One of the burning questions to-day in Christian apologetics is the state of the soul after death. Is there a punishment after death? Is it eternal? Or will all be finally saved? It

is, therefore, of interest to see how Professor Bruce states the case.

"The life eternal," he says, "occupies a large place in the Christian system of thought, as it cannot fail to do in the case of all who really believe that man survives death. And the question: Who share in that eternal life? weighs heavily on the Christian heart. Some cherish the belief that all without exception shall participate in its bliss, and that such as pass out of this life unprepared for the glorious inheritance shall be fitted for it by a disciplinary process in an intermediate state of being. General apologetic can recognize the legitimacy of this generous forecast, while not pronouncing dogmatically on the question. For the Christian theory of the universe, universal salvation is not an article of faith any more than it is a heresy. The Christian philosopher does not believe that there is anything in the elements of matter out of which the universe is built capable of frustrating the divine purpose. But he does recognize in the will of man a possible barrier to the realization of the Creator's beneficent intentions. He remembers the ominous words of Jesus: 'I would, ye would not,' and is content to cherish large hope, without dogmatically asserting the larger and larger possibility."

"This is a view of the question that will not please the extremists on either side, but for that very reason it comes nearer to the fundamental idea of Christianity, which has always allowed its disciples to form their own opinions on the subject."

We have not space to dwell longer on the most able and candid presentation of the essential elements of Christianity. Its admirable spirit, no less than the strength of its arguments, will go far to remove many of the prejudices or doubts of those who are outside of Christianity, but who are, nevertheless, not infrequently, too often it has happened, that those men have been neglected by Christian writers, who devote all their attention either to strengthening the faith of those good souls in the Church, who already believe more than their spiritual nature can assimilate, or go on a fierce Quixotic tilt against the blatant and ribald infidel, who, of course, only laughs at their antics. The modern Christian apologist must address himself to the educated, reasonable men of the day, who stay out of the Church, not because they are irreligious, but because they are unreligious. They look upon much that the churches consider fundamental as trivial or transient, while on the other hand they have a keen appreciation of many of the spiritual principles of Christianity, which the churches sometimes lose sight of. These men are largely shaping the destiny of the world to-day, and it would be well for the churches, instead of mourning over such men as "infidels," to offer them some such rational conception of Christian teaching as is embodied in this admirable defense of Christianity by Professor Bruce.

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